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INTRODUCTION TO THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF CHINA'S
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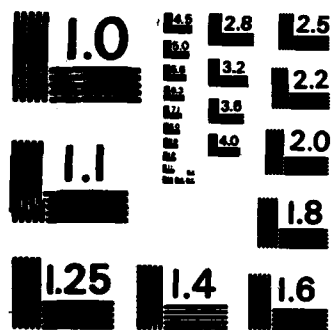
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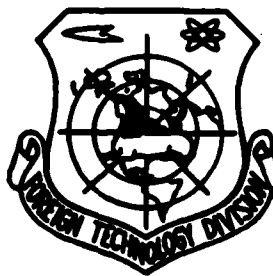
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FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION



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INTRODUCTION TO THE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS OF CHINA'S CIVIL AVIATION

(EDITORIAL COMMENT)

Appearing in the 9th Issue 1984 of the Japanese "Aeronautics Journal" was an article written by Aoki Hinode on the recent changes and development in the Civil Aviation Administration of China. The following is the Chinese translation of the article. It should be noted that our publication of this article does not mean that we agree with the author on his viewpoints and that we approve the accuracy of his report, but rather, provide the reader with some overseas comments on the civil aviation of our country.

There have been some changes in China's civil aviation, those who have recently flown the CAAC all agreed.

China's civil aviation is undergoing change. First of all, there is the change in the airlines that are in use. In the past, there were mostly old-fashioned planes imported from the Soviet Union, which passengers were reluctant to fly in. If they had a new one, it was the English-made plane. Recently, however, since people have seen Boeing jet airplanes in China which they have been used to seeing in their own countries, they naturally feel that there are lots of changes that have taken place in China's civil aviation.

Another noticeable change is the passenger service on board. The service currently is similar to that of the western kind which is excellent. At least, one can see lots of smiles. There is much improvement in the food, too. They no longer serve drinks with huge kettles. Instead, they use small pots. It is not quite important what size of pots they use to serve drinks to passengers; however, what really counts is the fact that one sees lots of smiles, and that is epoch-making.

Because of the fact that so far the general impression about China's civil aviation service has been poor--the coolness of the air stewardesses, the low efficiency, the poor state of facilities, to name only a few, it will be good if substantial improvement has been made.

The discontent about China's civil aviation was not only with the coldness of the air stewardesses and the tasteless food served on board, but also the long period of time passengers had to wait to claim their luggage after getting off the planes, for example, Shanghai and Peking. Also, another headache for passengers was the difficulty in booking tickets since there was no service provided where you could have your trip connected between different places. It was very difficult to book a ticket for the next flight when arriving at a local place. It might be the conflict between modern air transportation demand and the poor state of the civil aviation system, which resulted in the way it was.

Those are the problems also commonly seen in the Soviet Union, the countries of eastern Europe and Africa. However, China among them remains especially more closely observed by the world. China having just come out of the turmoils of the Cultural Revolution is striving to quicken its pace of modernization. Due to the system and way institution have been formed for a long time, however, it is not at all easy to make changes. It is not so simple, I think, that the country can eliminate its present poor conditions and make improvements by posting a public notice and launching a one-month civilization and courtesy movement. If all the Chinese people respond to that call, it will certainly be something great. But how much achievement can be made will still remain our focus of interest.

For that matter, as to what is the scale of the China civil aviation and what they are doing every day, it is worth new insight and understanding. The following is an introduction to the recent development of China's civil aviation.

CAAC includes All China Civil Aviation. The Civil Aviation Administration of China, abbreviated CAAC, is in charge of the whole China civil aviation system. It is different from ordinary airline companies but similar to the Traffic Administration of the Japan Transportation Ministry. Its responsibility includes making policy and regulations for civil aviation, aviation traffic, operation and maintenance of civil airlines, selling of airline tickets and other commodities, management of airports, passenger lounges and anything related to civil aviation. Such a scale as compared with Japan's is equivalent to the combination of the Aviation Bureau of Japan's Transportation Ministry, airport companies, airport equipment companies, civil aviation companies and other related enterprises in addition to the various affiliated institutions. It is indeed like a huge trust.

→ (Translations, Chinese language) ←

It is incomprehensible for the west that such an aviation institution, while having management authority, is itself also under management authority. But this is commonly seen in socialist countries as regulated by the system. Since there is only one airline company that runs air transportation having no competition, it is very unlikely that there can be much substantial improvement made.

CAAC has grown into a large institution. In a country 9,600,000 km² large (25 times as large as Japan, and larger than the USA) with a population of one billion (one-fourth of the world), it is only too natural to form such a huge institution.

Since many statistics are not available from the socialist countries, one can only depend on his own estimation which makes it very hard to obtain accurate information. It is also true of China's civil aviation. In estimation, there are about 3,800,000 to 4,000,000 passengers flying CAAC regularly; the total CAAC staff is about 50,000. It is said that CAAC owns over 500 airplanes.

For a civil aviation institution with 50,000 employees and 500 aircraft in possession, it is already quite a considerable figure. The largest airline company in the west is United Airlines in the USA. It has a staff of 42,000 and owns 329 airplanes. Compared with each other, the scale of CAAC exceeds by a wide margin United Airlines which, however, has an annual passenger load of 33 million. It is incomprehensible as to what the huge CAAC staff is up to in that large scale institution. It is likely that included in CAAC, in terms of different kinds of airplanes, are also trainer aircraft, helicopters and any airplanes used professionally.

The same example can be taken of the Soviet Union. With a staff of 500,000 and equipped with 7000 aircraft, the Soviet airlines carry an annual passenger load of 120,000,000, including 2,700,000 international passengers. Although the Soviet Aviation Company is the biggest airline in the world, the number of their employees and aircraft are just too astronomical. The Soviet Aviation Company is also composed of a staff in charge of air traffic control and airport management, besides the aircraft used professionally, and the helicopters. The helicopters alone number about 2000. Perhaps it is not quite suitable to make a comparison with those roughly estimated statistics.

There is much difference between the west and the Soviet Union as well as the eastern European countries in the way of consideration in respect to alternate aircraft. Even though the utilization ratio is low, with so many alternate aircraft, they are able to make up for the loss. That is why they have more aircraft than western airline companies. For that matter, there is a lot of comparison to be made. Take CAAC, for example, their mid-sized aircraft alone (with a seating capacity of 50) are over 200, which is on quite a big scale.

THE MODERNIZATION OF AIRCRAFT

At the beginning of New China, though taken over by the government and assisted by the Soviet Union, CAAC was in an isolated position in the world. The civil aviation was undergoing a series of difficulties over a vast territory. Besides the aircraft, for example, "Air Overlord", "DC-4", from China National Airlines (CNAC), they also got "Le-2" and "IL-14" from the Soviet Union.

Until 1960, China's civil aviation was no better even than in 1947. Between important cities, Peking-Shanghai, Peking-Guangchou, for example, they finally managed to open flights three times a week. The longest air route was between Hankou and Nanning which is 1000 km. The only international air route was between Peking and Moscow where they flew "IL-18" which was a Soviet chartered flight.

In order to reinforce transportation, China once attempted to buy modern aircraft. However, it was not easy for China at that time. At first, they imported "IL-18" from the Soviet Union. But due to the frequent malfunctions of the aircraft engines which often left the aircraft useless, China eventually had to return the aircraft to the Soviet Union. By 1963, they finally purchased six "Viscount" aircraft from Great Britain. But the problem of shipment of the aircraft to China arose. It was politically difficult since China was a socialist country and there was the Taiwan issue, all of which made it hard to predict the future.

The English made careful considerations and decided to ship the aircraft secretly to Hong Kong, having removed the trademark from their products. From March 1964, China started to use the Viscount for the flight between Peking and Shanghai. This perhaps was one of the major reasons which contributed to the mixed-up

assortment of models of aircraft of CAAC. It was said that it was under international pressure that Great Britain sold the aircraft to China. In memory of such hospitality and bravery, China is still grateful to Great Britain and this is also why the English and Chinese aviation relationship has been developing so well. It was a long time before those aircraft imported from the Soviet Union were replaced with new engines and put into use.

In 1971, China started purchasing IL-62 jet aircraft from the Soviet Union. As the Sino-Soviet relationship was already worsening and China was in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, there must have been many people who could not understand such a deal, let alone the political and commercial negotiations. It should be pointed out that such a deal was based on the Sino-Soviet Trade Agreement made in 1970. China bought about 25 IL-18's and five IL-62's from the Soviet Union. Later on, China bought the Trident from Great Britain. Such a purchase was started in November 1972.

Earlier, China had used "T" aircraft. In 1970, China borrowed a T-1E from Pakistan and put it in domestic flights. After buying the new aircraft from Great Britain, China used them alternately with the one borrowed from Pakistan. Since then, China has bought 33 T-2E's and 2 T-3B's. As the Chinese Air Force also needed such aircraft, CAAC is now left with 33 of this kind.

1972 saw the normalization of relations between the USA and China. China started to buy 10 Boeing 707's from the U. S. The actual use of the aircraft started in 1974. Since then, these aircraft have been used as a main force in air transportation. The American-made aircraft being hailed as a major import, China again bought another three Boeing 747-SP's and put them in Pacific flights.

The CAAC overseas flights, along with increasing modernization of their aircraft, began to develop. IL-14 and IL-18 were only used to fly to the Soviet Union, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and other neighboring countries. After purchasing IL-62's

from the Soviet Union, CAAC started to fly to eastern European countries. Since September 1974, having been equipped with newly purchased Boeing 707's and the active "open door" policy adopted by the government, China opened an air route to Tokyo and, subsequently, to the Middle East, Africa, Europe, the Philippines and the United States.

It is apparent that CAAC is still making efforts to replace their aircraft with modern equipment for domestic and short distance overseas flights. There have been altogether 10 Boeing 737's ordered with some already in use since the spring of 1983. Those aircraft will replace the Viscount which have been in use for 20 years. In late 1983, CAAC bought two MD-82 aircraft from McDonnell Douglas. Obviously, CAAC is quickening the pace to modernize their aircraft. Of course, large aircraft for long distance use are also increasing, for example, Boeing's 747-SP and 747-200.

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